

# London's Swifts



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## Information for Local Government

**Swifts** are the UK's fastest bird. Their calls mean Summer is here. They need to nest in buildings, in eaves or upper walls, and feed on flying insects. Thriving in cities and towns, they fill the evening with their aerobatic flight and elfin calls. Clean and exciting, they add life and interest to any area.

**Why they need your help** swifts rarely nest in post-1944 or refurbished older buildings, as they cannot gain access. With a 60-year deficit in new nest sites, and excluded from an increasing number of old ones, they are starting to decline. If we do nothing, they will soon vanish from our town and city skies.

**What you can do** Preserving existing, and installing new Swift nest sites is easy. With no need for maintenance or cleaning, and costing very little, a Swift colony is a good option for introducing biodiversity.

**Three Easy Answers** 1. Preserve existing eaves colonies by separating them from adjacent roofspaces with a ventilated plywood screen. 2. Design and build hollow eaves just for Swifts, with suitable small access holes. 3. Insert concrete "Swift Brick" nest boxes into the walls at two storey height and above (but not in full sunlight!)

### Examples of Good Practice

Local Authorities in West Sussex, Aylesbury and Camden are active in preserving and installing Swift nest places. Zurich and Amsterdam have policies in place, backed by simple and effective legislation, preserving their Swift populations.



**What it will cost** Maintaining existing sites and creating new Swift eaves involves minimal design and effort, and uses readily available plywood and carpentry skills. Ready-made concrete Swift Bricks for insertion into brick or block-work walls cost £22 each from Jacobi Jayne Ltd on 0800 072 0130. You can install 10 for a 20-Swift colony suitable for a block of flats for just £220. Install Swift Bricks in a landmark development, and create a cultural feature that will give your building its own permanent signature.

**Help is available** London's Swifts advises on nest-place location, design, and installation. We provide sketch plans, specifications, source materials, and advise at site and planning meetings. Just ask and we will do our best to help you. Our advice is free.

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